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HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND
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How He Lied to Her
Husband. In One Act,
with Preface. By Bernard
Shaw.

Constable and Company
Ltd. London: 1910.

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HOW HE LIED TO HER
HUSBAND

XIV

1904

PREFACE

LIKE many other works of mine, this playlet is a *pièce d'occasion*. In 1905 it happened that Mr Arnold Daly, who was then playing the part of Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny* in New York, found that whilst the play was too long to take a secondary place in the evening's performance, it was too short to suffice by itself. I therefore took advantage of four days continuous rain during a holiday in the north of Scotland to write *How He Lied To Her Husband* for Mr Daly. In his hands, it served its turn very effectively.

I print it here as a sample of what can be done with even the most hackneyed stage framework by filling it in with an observed touch of actual humanity instead of with doctrinaire romanticism. Nothing in the theatre is staler than the situation of husband, wife and lover, or the fun of knockabout farce. I have taken both, and got an original play out of them, as anybody else can if only he will look about him for his material instead of plagiarizing *Othello* and the thousand plays that have proceeded on *Othello's* romantic assumptions and false point of honor.

A further experiment made by Mr Arnold Daly with this play is worth recording. In 1905 Mr Daly produced *Mrs Warren's Profession* in New York. The press of that city instantly raised a cry that such persons as Mrs Warren are "ordure," and should not be mentioned in the presence of decent people. This hideous repudiation of humanity and social conscience so took possession of the New York

journalists that the few among them who kept their feet morally and intellectually could do nothing to check the epidemic of foul language, gross suggestion, and raving obscenity of word and thought that broke out. The writers abandoned all self-restraint under the impression that they were upholding virtue instead of outraging it. They infected each other with their hysteria until they were for all practical purposes indecently mad. They finally forced the police to arrest Mr Daly and his company, and led the magistrate to express his loathing of the duty thus forced upon him of reading an unmentionable and abominable play. Of course the convulsion soon exhausted itself. The magistrate, naturally somewhat impatient when he found that what he had to read was a strenuously ethical play forming part of a book which had been in circulation unchallenged for eight years, and had been received without protest by the whole London and New York press, gave the journalists a piece of his mind as to their moral taste in plays. By consent, he passed the case on to a higher court, which declared that the play was not immoral; acquitted Mr Daly; and made an end of the attempt to use the law to declare living women to be "ordure," and thus enforce silence as to the far-reaching fact that you cannot cheapen women in the market for industrial purposes without cheapening them for other purposes as well. I hope Mrs Warren's Profession will be played everywhere, in season and out of season, until Mrs Warren has bitten that fact into the public conscience, and shamed the newspapers which support a tariff to keep up the price of every American commodity except American manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, Mr Daly had already suffered the usual fate of those who direct public attention to the profits of the sweater or the pleasures of the voluptuary. He was morally lynched side by side with me. Months elapsed before the decision of the courts vindicated him; and even then, since his vindication implied the condemnation of the press, which was by that time sober again, and ashamed

of its orgie, his triumph received a rather sulky and grudging publicity. In the meantime he had hardly been able to approach an American city, including even those cities which had heaped applause on him as the defender of hearth and home when he produced *Candida*, without having to face articles discussing whether mothers could allow their daughters to attend such plays as *You Never Can Tell*, written by the infamous author of *Mrs Warren's Profession*, and acted by the monster who produced it. What made this harder to bear was that though no fact is better established in theatrical business than the financial disastrousness of moral discredit, the journalists who had done all the mischief kept paying vice the homage of assuming that it is enormously popular and lucrative, and that I and Mr Daly, being exploiters of vice, must therefore be making colossal fortunes out of the abuse heaped on us, and had in fact provoked it and welcomed it with that express object. Ignorance of real life could hardly go further.

One consequence was that Mr Daly could not have kept his financial engagements or maintained his hold on the public had he not accepted engagements to appear for a season in the vaudeville theatres (the American equivalent of our music halls), where he played *How He Lied to Her Husband* comparatively unhampered by the press censorship of the theatre, or by that sophistication of the audience through press suggestion from which I suffer more, perhaps, than any other author. Vaudeville authors are fortunately unknown: the audiences see what the play contains and what the actor can do, not what the papers have told them to expect. Success under such circumstances had a value both for Mr Daly and myself which did something to console us for the very unsavory mobbing which the New York press organized for us, and which was not the less disgusting because we suffered in a good cause and in the very best company.

Mr Daly, having weathered the storm, can perhaps shake his soul free of it as he heads for fresh successes with

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younger authors. But I have certain sensitive places in my soul: I do not like that word "ordure." Apply it to my work, and I can afford to smile, since the world, on the whole, will smile with me. But to apply it to the woman in the street, whose spirit is of one substance with our own and her body no less holy: to look your women folk in the face afterwards and not go out and hang yourself: that is not on the list of pardonable sins.

POSTSCRIPT. Since the above was written news has arrived from America that a leading New York newspaper, which was among the most abusively clamorous for the suppression of Mrs Warren's Profession, has just been fined heavily for deriving part of its revenue from advertisements of Mrs Warren's houses.

Many people have been puzzled by the fact that whilst stage entertainments which are frankly meant to act on the spectators as aphrodisiacs, are everywhere tolerated, plays which have an almost horrifyingly contrary effect are fiercely attacked by persons and papers notoriously indifferent to public morals on all other occasions. The explanation is very simple. The profits of Mrs Warren's profession are shared not only by Mrs Warren and Sir George Crofts, but by the landlords of their houses, the newspapers which advertize them, the restaurants which cater for them, and, in short, all the trades to which they are good customers, not to mention the public officials and representatives whom they silence by complicity, corruption, or blackmail. Add to these the employers who profit by cheap female labor, and the shareholders whose dividends depend on it (you find such people everywhere, even on the judicial bench and in the highest places in Church and State), and you get a large and powerful class with a strong pecuniary incentive to protect Mrs Warren's profession, and a correspondingly strong incentive to conceal, from their own consciences no less than from the world, the real sources of their gain. These are the people who declare that it is

feminine vice and not poverty that drives women to the streets, as if vicious women with independent incomes ever went there. These are the people who, indulgent or indifferent to aphrodisiac plays, raise the moral hue and cry against performances of Mrs Warren's Profession, and drag actresses to the police court to be insulted, bullied, and threatened for fulfilling their engagements. For please observe that the judicial decision in New York State in favor of the play does not end the matter. In Kansas City, for instance, the municipality, finding itself restrained by the courts from preventing the performance, fell back on a local bye-law against indecency to evade the Constitution of the United States. They summoned the actress who impersonated Mrs Warren to the police court, and offered her and her colleagues the alternative of leaving the city or being prosecuted under this bye-law.

Now nothing is more possible than that the city councillors who suddenly displayed such concern for the morals of the theatre were either Mrs Warren's landlords, or employers of women at starvation wages, or restaurant keepers, or newspaper proprietors, or in some other more or less direct way sharers of the profits of her trade. No doubt it is equally possible that they were simply stupid men who thought that indecency consists, not in evil, but in mentioning it. I have, however, been myself a member of a municipal council, and have not found municipal councillors quite so simple and inexperienced as this. At all events I do not propose to give the Kansas councillors the benefit of the doubt. I therefore advise the public at large, which will finally decide the matter, to keep a vigilant eye on gentlemen who will stand anything at the theatre except a performance of Mrs Warren's Profession, and who assert in the same breath that (*a*) the play is too loathsome to be bearable by civilized people, and (*b*) that unless its performance is prohibited the whole town will throng to see it. They may be merely excited and foolish ;

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but I am bound to warn the public that it is equally likely that they may be collected and knavish.

At all events, to prohibit the play is to protect the evil which the play exposes ; and in view of that fact, I see no reason for assuming that the prohibitionists are disinterested moralists, and that the author, the managers, and the performers, who depend for their livelihood on their personal reputations and not on rents, advertisements, or dividends, are grossly inferior to them in moral sense and public responsibility.

It is true that in Mrs Warren's Profession, Society, and not any individual, is the villain of the piece ; but it does not follow that the people who take offence at it are all champions of society. Their credentials cannot be too carefully examined.

HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND

It is eight o'clock in the evening. The curtains are drawn and the lamps lighted in the drawing room of Her flat in Cromwell Road. Her lover, a beautiful youth of eighteen, in evening dress and cape, with a bunch of flowers and an opera hat in his hands, comes in alone. The door is near the corner; and as he appears in the doorway, he has the fireplace on the nearest wall to his right, and the grand piano along the opposite wall to his left. Near the fireplace a small ornamental table has on it a hand mirror, a fan, a pair of long white gloves, and a little white woollen cloud to wrap a woman's head in. On the other side of the room, near the piano, is a broad, square, softly upholstered stool. The room is furnished in the most approved South Kensington fashion: that is, it is as like a show room as possible, and is intended to demonstrate the social position and spending powers of its owners, and not in the least to make them comfortable.

He is, be it repeated, a very beautiful youth, moving as in a dream, walking as on air. He puts his flowers down carefully on the table beside the fan; takes off his cape, and, as there is no room on the table for it, takes it to the piano; puts his hat on the cape; crosses to the hearth; looks at his watch; puts it up again; notices the things on the table; lights up as if he saw heaven opening before him; goes to the table and takes the cloud in both hands, nestling his nose into its softness and kissing it; kisses the gloves one after another; kisses the fan; gasps a

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long shuddering sigh of ecstasy ; sits down on the stool and presses his hands to his eyes to shut out reality and dream a little ; takes his hands down and shakes his head with a little smile of rebuke for his folly ; catches sight of a speck of dust on his shoes and hastily and carefully brushes it off with his handkerchief ; rises and takes the hand mirror from the table to make sure of his tie with the gravest anxiety ; and is looking at his watch again when She comes in, much flustered. As she is dressed for the theatre ; has spoilt, petted ways ; and wears many diamonds, she has an air of being a young and beautiful woman ; but as a matter of hard fact, she is, dress and pretensions apart, a very ordinary South Kensington female of about 37, hopelessly inferior in physical and spiritual distinction to the beautiful youth, who hastily puts down the mirror as she enters.

HE [*kissing her hand*] At last !

SHE. Henry : something dreadful has happened.

HE. Whats the matter ?

SHE. I have lost your poems.

HE. They were unworthy of you. I will write you some more.

SHE. No, thank you. Never any more poems for me. Oh, how could I have been so mad ! so rash ! so imprudent !

HE. Thank Heaven for your madness, your rashness, your imprudence !

✓ SHE [*impatiently*] Oh, be sensible, Henry. Cant you see what a terrible thing this is for me ? Suppose anybody finds these poems ! what will they think ?

HE. They will think that a man once loved a woman more devotedly than ever man loved woman before. But they will not know what man it was.

SHE. What good is that to me if everybody will know what woman it was ?

HE. But how will they know ?

SHE. How will they know ! Why, my name is all over them : my silly, unhappy name. Oh, if I had only been

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christened Mary Jane, or Gladys Muriel, or Beatrice, or Francesca, or Guinevere, or something quite common! But Aurora! Aurora! I'm the only Aurora in London; and everybody knows it. I believe I'm the only Aurora in the world. And it's so horribly easy to rhyme to it! Oh, Henry, why didnt you try to restrain your feelings a little in common consideration for me? Why didnt you write with some little reserve?

HE. Write poems to you with reserve! You ask me that!

SHE [*with perfunctory tenderness*] Yes, dear, of course it was very nice of you; and I know it was my own fault as much as yours. I ought to have noticed that your verses ought never to have been addressed to a married woman.

HE. Ah, how I wish they had been addressed to an unmarried woman! how I wish they had!

SHE. Indeed you have no right to wish anything of the sort. They are quite unfit for anybody but a married woman. Thats just the difficulty. What will my sisters-in-law think of them?

HE [*painfully jarred*] Have you got sisters-in-law?

SHE. Yes, of course I have. Do you suppose I am an angel?

HE [*biting his lips*] I do. Heaven help me, I do—or I did—or [*he almost chokes a sob*].

SHE [*softening and putting her hand caressingly on his shoulder*] Listen to me, dear. It's very nice of you to live with me in a dream, and to love me, and so on; but I cant help my husband having disagreeable relatives, can I?

HE [*brightening up*] Ah, of course they are your husband's relatives: I forgot that. Forgive me, Aurora. [*He takes her hand from his shoulder and kisses it. She sits down on the stool. He remains near the table, with his back to it, smiling fatuously down at her*].

SHE. The fact is, Teddy's got nothing but relatives. He has eight sisters and six half-sisters, and ever so many brothers—but I dont mind his brothers. Now if you only

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knew the least little thing about the world, Henry, you'd know that in a large family, though the sisters quarrel with one another like mad all the time, yet let one of the brothers marry, and they all turn on their unfortunate sister-in-law and devote the rest of their lives with perfect unanimity to persuading him that his wife is unworthy of him. They can do it to her very face without her knowing it, because there are always a lot of stupid low family jokes that nobody understands but themselves. Half the time you can't tell what they're talking about: it just drives you wild. There ought to be a law against a man's sister ever entering his house after he's married. I'm as certain as that I'm sitting here that Georgina stole those poems out of my workbox.

HE. She will not understand them, I think.

SHE. Oh, won't she! She'll understand them only too well. She'll understand more harm than ever was in them: nasty vulgar-minded cat!

HE [*going to her*] Oh don't, don't think of people in that way. Don't think of her at all. [*He takes her hand and sits down on the carpet at her feet*]. Aurora: do you remember the evening when I sat here at your feet and read you those poems for the first time?

SHE. I shouldn't have let you: I see that now. When I think of Georgina sitting there at Teddy's feet and reading them to him for the first time, I feel I shall just go distracted.

HE. Yes, you are right. It will be a profanation.

SHE. Oh, I don't care about the profanation; but what will Teddy think? what will he do? [*Suddenly throwing his head away from her knee*]. You don't seem to think a bit about Teddy. [*She jumps up, more and more agitated*].

HE [*supine on the floor; for she has thrown him off his balance*] To me Teddy is nothing, and Georgina less than nothing.

SHE. You'll soon find out how much less than nothing she is. If you think a woman can't do any harm because

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shes only a scandalmongering dowdy ragbag; youre greatly mistaken. [*She flounces about the room. He gets up slowly and dusts his hands. Suddenly she runs to him and throws herself into his arms*]. Henry: help me. Find a way out of this for me; and I'll bless you as long as you live. Oh, how wretched I am! [*She sobs on his breast*].

HE. And oh! how happy I am!

SHE [*whisking herself abruptly away*] Dont be selfish.

HE [*humbly*] Yes: I deserve that. I think if I were going to the stake with you, I should still be so happy with you that I could hardly feel your danger more than my own.

SHE [*relenting and patting his hand fondly*] Oh, you are a dear darling boy, Henry; but [*throwing his hand away fretfully*] youre no use. I want somebody to tell me what to do.

HE [*with quiet conviction*] Your heart will tell you at the right time. I have thought deeply over this; and I know what we two must do, sooner or later.

SHE. No, Henry. I will do nothing improper, nothing dishonorable. [*She sits down plump on the stool and looks inflexible*].

HE. If you did, you would no longer be Aurora. Our course is perfectly simple, perfectly straightforward, perfectly stainless and true. We love one another. I am not ashamed of that: I am ready to go out and proclaim it to all London as simply as I will declare it to your husband when you see—as you soon will see—that this is the only way honorable enough for your feet to tread. Let us go out together to our own house, this evening, without concealment and without shame. Remember! we owe something to your husband. We are his guests here: he is an honorable man: he has been kind to us: he has perhaps loved you as well as his prosaic nature and his sordid commercial environment permitted. We owe it to him in all honor not to let him learn the truth from the lips of a scandalmonger. Let us go to him now quietly, hand in

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hand; bid him farewell; and walk out of the house without concealment and subterfuge, freely and honestly, in full honor and self-respect.

SHE [*staring at him*] And where shall we go to?

HE. We shall not depart by a hair's breadth from the ordinary natural current of our lives. We were going to the theatre when the loss of the poems compelled us to take action at once. We shall go to the theatre still; but we shall leave your diamonds here; for we cannot afford diamonds, and do not need them.

SHE [*fretfully*] I have told you already that I hate diamonds; only Teddy insists on hanging me all over with them. You need not preach simplicity to me.

HE. I never thought of doing so, dearest: I know that these trivialities are nothing to you. What was I saying?—oh yes. Instead of coming back here from the theatre, you will come with me to my home—now and henceforth our home—and in due course of time, when you are divorced, we shall go through whatever idle legal ceremony you may desire. I attach no importance to the law: my love was not created in me by the law, nor can it be bound or loosed by it. That is simple enough, and sweet enough, is it not? [*He takes the flowers from the table*]. Here are flowers for you: I have the tickets: we will ask your husband to lend us the carriage to shew that there is no malice, no grudge, between us. Come!

SHE [*spiritlessly, taking the flowers without looking at them, and temporizing*] Teddy isn't in yet.

HE. Well, let us take that calmly. Let us go to the theatre as if nothing had happened, and tell him when we come back. Now or three hours hence: to-day or to-morrow: what does it matter, provided all is done in honor, without shame or fear?

SHE. What did you get tickets for? Lohengrin?

HE. I tried; but Lohengrin was sold out for to-night. [*He takes out two Court Theatre tickets*].

SHE. Then what did you get?

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HE. Can you ask me? What is there besides Lohengrin that we two could endure, except Candida?

SHE [*springing up*] Candida! No, I wont go to it again, Henry [*tossing the flowers on the piano*]. It is that play that has done all the mischief. I'm very sorry I ever saw it: it ought to be stopped.

HE [*amazed*] Aurora!

SHE. Yes: I mean it.

HE. That divinest love poem! the poem that gave us courage to speak to one another! that revealed to us what we really felt for one another! that—

SHE. Just so. It put a lot of stuff into my head that I should never have dreamt of for myself. I imagined myself just like Candida.

HE [*catching her hands and looking earnestly at her*] You were right. You are like Candida.

SHE [*snatching her hands away*] Oh, stuff! And I thought you were just like Eugene. [*Looking critically at him*] Now that I come to look at you, you are rather like him, too. [*She throws herself discontentedly into the nearest seat, which happens to be the bench at the piano. He goes to her*]

HE [*very earnestly*] Aurora: if Candida had loved Eugene she would have gone out into the night with him without a moment's hesitation.

SHE [*with equal earnestness*] Henry: do you know what's wanting in that play?

HE. There is nothing wanting in it.

SHE. Yes there is. There's a Georgina wanting in it. If Georgina had been there to make trouble, that play would have been a true-to-life tragedy. Now I'll tell you something about it that I have never told you before.

HE. What is that?

SHE. I took Teddy to it. I thought it would do him good; and so it would if I could only have kept him awake. Georgina came too; and you should have heard the way she went on about it. She said it was downright

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immoral, and that she knew the sort of woman that encourages boys to sit on the hearthrug and make love to her. She was just preparing Teddy's mind to poison it about me.

HE. Let us be just to Georgina, dearest—

SHE. Let her deserve it first. Just to Georgina, indeed!

HE. She really sees the world in that way. That is her punishment.

SHE. How can it be her punishment when she likes it? It'll be my punishment when she brings that budget of poems to Teddy. I wish you'd have some sense, and sympathize with my position a little.

HE. [*going away from the piano and beginning to walk about rather testily*] My dear: I really don't care about Georgina or about Teddy. All these squabbles belong to a plane on which I am, as you say, no use. I have counted the cost; and I do not fear the consequences. After all, what is there to fear? Where is the difficulty? What can Georgina do? What can your husband do? What can anybody do?

SHE. Do you mean to say that you propose that we should walk right bang up to Teddy and tell him we're going away together?

HE. Yes. What can be simpler?

SHE. And do you think for a moment he'd stand it, like that half-baked clergyman in the play? He'd just kill you.

HE [*coming to a sudden stop and speaking with considerable confidence*] You don't understand these things, my darling: how could you? In one respect I am unlike the poet in the play. I have followed the Greek ideal and not neglected the culture of my body. Your husband would make a tolerable second-rate heavy weight if he were in training and ten years younger. As it is, he could, if strung up to a great effort by a burst of passion, give a good account of himself for perhaps fifteen seconds. But I am active enough to keep out of his reach for fifteen seconds; and after that I should be simply all over him.

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SHE [*rising and coming to him in consternation*] What do you mean by all over him?

HE [*gently*] Dont ask me, dearest. At all events, I swear to you that you need not be anxious about me.

SHE. And what about Teddy? Do you mean to tell me that you are going to beat Teddy before my face like a brutal prizefighter?

HE. All this alarm is needless, dearest. Believe me, nothing will happen. Your husband knows that I am capable of defending myself. Under such circumstances nothing ever does happen. And of course *I* shall do nothing. The man who once loved you is sacred to me.

SHE [*suspiciously*] Doesnt he love me still? Has he told you anything?

HE. No, no. [*He takes her tenderly in his arms*]. Dearest, dearest: how agitated you are! how unlike yourself! All these worries belong to the lower plane. Come up with me to the higher one. The heights, the solitudes, the soul world!

SHE [*avoiding his gaze*] No: stop: it's no use, Mr Apjohn.

HE [*recoiling*] Mr Apjohn!!!

SHE. Excuse me: I meant Henry, of course.

HE. How could you even think of me as Mr Apjohn? I never think of you as Mrs Bompas: it is always Cand— I mean Aurora, Aurora, Auro—

SHE. Yes, yes: thats all very well, Mr Apjohn [*he is about to interrupt again: but she wont have it*] no: it's no use: I've suddenly begun to think of you as Mr Apjohn; and it's ridiculous to go on calling you Henry. I thought you were only a boy, a child, a dreamer. I thought you would be too much afraid to do anything. And now you want to beat Teddy and to break up my home and disgrace me and make a horrible scandal in the papers. It's cruel, unmanly, cowardly.

HE [*with grave wonder*] Are you afraid?

SHE. Oh, of course I'm afraid. So would you be if you

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had any common sense. [*She goes to the hearth, turning her back to him, and puts one tapping foot on the fender*].

HE [*watching her with great gravity*] Perfect love casteth out fear. That is why I am not afraid. Mrs Bompas: you do not love me.

SHE [*turning to him with a gasp of relief*] Oh, thank you, thank you! You really can be very nice, Henry.

HE. Why do you thank me?

SHE [*coming prettily to him from the fireplace*] For calling me Mrs Bompas again. I feel now that you are going to be reasonable and behave like a gentleman. [*He drops on the stool; covers his face with his hands; and groans*]. Whats the matter?

HE. Once or twice in my life I have dreamed that I was exquisitely happy and blessed. But oh! the misgiving at the first stir of consciousness! the stab of reality! the prison walls of the bedroom! the bitter, bitter disappointment of waking! And this time! oh, this time I thought I was awake.

SHE. Listen to me, Henry: we really havnt time for all that sort of flapdoodle now. [*He starts to his feet as if she had pulled a trigger and straightened him by the release of a powerful spring, and goes past her with set teeth to the little table*]. Oh, take care: you nearly hit me in the chin with the top of your head.

HE [*with fierce politeness*] I beg your pardon. What is it you want me to do? I am at your service. I am ready to behave like a gentleman if you will be kind enough to explain exactly how.

SHE [*a little frightened*] Thank you, Henry: I was sure you would. Youre not angry with me, are you?

HE. Go on. Go on quickly. Give me something to think about, or I will—I will—[*he suddenly snatches up her fan and is about to break it in his clenched fists*].

SHE [*running forward and catching at the fan, with loud lamentation*] Dont break my fan—no, dont. [*He slowly relaxes his grip of it as she draws it anxiously out of his hands*]

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No, really, thats a stupid trick. I dont like that. Youve no right to do that. [*She opens the fan, and finds that the sticks are disconnected*]. Oh, how could you be so inconsiderate?

HE. I beg your pardon. I will buy you a new one.

SHE [*querulously*] You will never be able to match it. And it was a particular favorite of mine.

HE [*shortly*] Then you will have to do without it : thats all.

SHE. Thats not a very nice thing to say after breaking my pet fan, I think.

HE. If you knew how near I was to breaking Teddy's pet wife and presenting him with the pieces, you would be thankful that you are alive instead of—of—of howling about fiveshillingsworth of ivory. Damn your fan!

SHE. Oh! Dont you dare swear in my presence. One would think you were my husband.

HE [*again collapsing on the stool*] This is some horrible dream. What has become of you? You are not my Aurora.

SHE. Oh, well, if you come to that, what has become of you? Do you think I would ever have encouraged you if I had known you were such a little devil?

HE. Dont drag me down—dont—dont. Help me to find the way back to the heights.

SHE [*kneeling beside him and pleading*] If you would only be reasonable, Henry. If you would only remember that I am on the brink of ruin, and not go on calmly saying it's all quite simple.

HE. It seems so to me.

SHE [*jumping up distractedly*] If you say that again I shall do something I'll be sorry for. Here we are, standing on the edge of a frightful precipice. No doubt it's quite simple to go over and have done with it. But cant you suggest anything more agreeable?

HE. I can suggest nothing now. A chill black darkness has fallen : I can see nothing but the ruins of our dream. [*He rises with a deep sigh*].

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SHE. Cant you? Well, I can. I can see Georgina rubbing those poems into Teddy. [*Facing him determinedly*] And I tell you, Henry Apjohn, that you got me into this mess; and you must get me out of it again.

HE [*polite and hopeless*] All I can say is that I am entirely at your service. What do you wish me to do?

SHE. Do you know anybody else named Aurora?

HE. No.

SHE. Theres no use in saying No in that frozen pigheaded way. You must know some Aurora or other somewhere.

HE. You said you were the only Aurora in the world. And [*lifting his clasped fists with a sudden return of his emotion*] oh God! you were the only Aurora in the world to me. [*He turns away from her, hiding his face*].

SHE [*petting him*] Yes, yes, dear: of course. It's very nice of you; and I appreciate it: indeed I do; but it's not seasonable just at present. Now just listen to me. I suppose you know all those poems by heart.

HE. Yes, by heart. [*Raising his head and looking at her with a sudden suspicion*] Dont you?

SHE. Well, I never can remember verses; and besides, Ive been so busy that Ive not had time to read them all; though I intend to the very first moment I can get: I promise you that most faithfully, Henry. But now try and remember very particularly. Does the name of Bompas occur in any of the poems?

HE [*indignantly*] No.

SHE. Youre quite sure?

HE. Of course I am quite sure. How could I use such a name in a poem?

SHE. Well, I dont see why not. It rhymes to rumpus, which seems appropriate enough at present, goodness knows! However, youre a poet, and you ought to know.

HE. What does it matter—now?

SHE. It matters a lot, I can tell you. If theres nothing about Bompas in the poems, we can say that they were written to some other Aurora, and that you shewed them

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to me because my name was Aurora too. So youve got to invent another Aurora for the occasion.

HE [*very coldly*] Oh, if you wish me to tell a lie—

SHE. Surely, as a man of honor—as a gentleman, you wouldnt tell the truth, would you?

HE. Very well. You have broken my spirit and desecrated my dreams. I will lie and protest and stand on my honor: oh, I will play the gentleman, never fear.

SHE. Yes, put it all on me, of course. Dont be mean, Henry.

HE [*rousing himself with an effort*] You are quite right, Mrs Bompas: I beg your pardon. You must excuse my temper. I have got growing pains, I think.

SHE. Growing pains!

HE. The process of growing from romantic boyhood into cynical maturity usually takes fifteen years. When it is compressed into fifteen minutes, the pace is too fast; and growing pains are the result.

SHE. Oh, is this a time for cleverness? It's settled, isnt it, that youre going to be nice and good, and that youll brazen it out to Teddy that you have some other Aurora?

HE. Yes: I'm capable of anything now. I should not have told him the truth by halves; and now I will not lie by halves. I'll wallow in the honor of a gentleman.

SHE. Dearest boy, I knew you would. I— Sh! [*she rushes to the door, and holds it ajar, listening breathlessly*].

HE. What is it?

SHE [*white with apprehension*] It's Teddy: I hear him tapping the new barometer. He cant have anything serious on his mind or he wouldnt do that. Perhaps Georgina hasnt said anything. [*She steals back to the hearth*]. Try and look as if there was nothing the matter. Give me my gloves, quick. [*He hands them to her. She pulls on one hastily and begins buttoning it with ostentatious unconcern*]. Go further away from me, quick. [*He walks doggedly away from her until the piano prevents his going farther*]. If I button my glove, and you were to hum a tune, dont you think that—

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HE. The tableau would be complete in its guiltiness. For Heaven's sake, Mrs Bompas, let that glove alone: you look like a pickpocket.

Her husband comes in: a robust, thicknecked, well groomed city man, with a strong chin but a blithering eye and credulous mouth. He has a momentous air, but shews no sign of displeasure: rather the contrary.

HER HUSBAND. Hallo! I thought you two were at the theatre.

SHE. I felt anxious about you, Teddy. Why didnt you come home to dinner?

HER HUSBAND. I got a message from Georgina. She wanted me to go to her.

SHE. Poor dear Georgina! I'm sorry I havnt been able to call on her this last week. I hope theres nothing the matter with her.

HER HUSBAND. Nothing, except anxiety for my welfare—and yours. [*She steals a terrified look at Henry*]. By the way, Apjohn, I should like a word with you this evening, if Aurora can spare you for a moment.

HE [*formally*]. I am at your service.

HER HUSBAND. No hurry. After the theatre will do.

HE. We have decided not to go.

HER HUSBAND. Indeed! Well, then, shall we adjourn to my snuggery?

SHE. You neednt move. I shall go and lock up my diamonds since I'm not going to the theatre. Give me my things.

HER HUSBAND [*as he hands her the cloud and the mirror*]. Well, we shall have more room here.

HE [*looking about him and shaking his shoulders loose*]. I think I should prefer plenty of room.

HER HUSBAND. So, if it's not disturbing you, Rory—?

SHE. Not at all. [*She goes out*].

When the two men are alone together, Bompas deliberately takes the poems from his breast pocket; looks at them reflectively; then looks at Henry, mutely inviting his attention.

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Henry refuses to understand, doing his best to look unconcerned.

HER HUSBAND. Do these manuscripts seem at all familiar to you, may I ask?

HE. Manuscripts?

HER HUSBAND. Yes. Would you like to look at them a little closer? [*He proffers them under Henry's nose*].

HE [*as with a sudden illumination of glad surprise*] Why, these are my poems!

HER HUSBAND. So I gather.

HE. What a shame! Mrs Bompas has shewn them to you! You must think me an utter ass. I wrote them years ago after reading Swinburne's Songs Before Sunrise. Nothing would do me then but I must reel off a set of Songs to the Sunrise. Aurora, you know: the rosy fingered Aurora. They're all about Aurora. When Mrs Bompas told me her name was Aurora, I couldn't resist the temptation to lend them to her to read. But I didn't bargain for your unsympathetic eyes.

HER HUSBAND [*grinning*] Apjohn: that's really very ready of you. You are cut out for literature; and the day will come when Rory and I will be proud to have you about the house. I have heard far thinner stories from much older men.

HE [*with an air of great surprise*] Do you mean to imply that you don't believe me?

HER HUSBAND. Do you expect me to believe you?

HE. Why not? I don't understand.

HER HUSBAND. Come! Don't underrate your own cleverness, Apjohn. I think you understand pretty well.

HE. I assure you I am quite at a loss. Can you not be a little more explicit?

HER HUSBAND. Don't overdo it, old chap. However, I will just be so far explicit as to say that if you think these poems read as if they were addressed, not to a live woman, but to a shivering cold time of day at which you were never out of bed in your life, you hardly do justice to your own

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literary powers—which I admire and appreciate, mind you, as much as any man. Come! own up. You wrote those poems to my wife. [*An internal struggle prevents Henry from answering*]. Of course you did. [*He throws the poems on the table; and goes to the hearthrug, where he plants himself solidly, chuckling a little and waiting for the next move*].

HE [*formally and carefully*] Mr Bompas : I pledge you my word you are mistaken. I need not tell you that Mrs Bompas is a lady of stainless honor, who has never cast an unworthy thought on me. The fact that she has shewn you my poems—

HER HUSBAND. Thats not a fact. I came by them without her knowledge. She didnt show them to me.

HE. Does not that prove their perfect innocence? She would have shewn them to you at once if she had taken your quite unfounded view of them.

HER HUSBAND [*shaken*] Apjohn : play fair. Dont abuse your intellectual gifts. Do you really mean that I am making a fool of myself?

HE [*earnestly*] Believe me, you are. I assure you, on my honor as a gentleman, that I have never had the slightest feeling for Mrs Bompas beyond the ordinary esteem and regard of a pleasant acquaintance.

HER HUSBAND [*shortly, showing ill humor for the first time*] Oh, indeed. [*He leaves his hearth and begins to approach Henry slowly, looking him up and down with growing resentment*].

HE [*hastening to improve the impression made by his mendacity*] I should never have dreamt of writing poems to her. The thing is absurd.

HER HUSBAND [*reddening ominously*] Why is it absurd?

HE [*shrugging his shoulders*] Well, it happens that I do not admire Mrs Bompas—in that way.

HER HUSBAND [*breaking out in Henry's face*] Let me tell you that Mrs Bompas has been admired by better men than you, you soapy headed little puppy, you.

HE [*much taken aback*] There is no need to insult me like this. I assure you, on my honor as a—

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HER HUSBAND [*too angry to tolerate a reply, and boring Henry more and more towards the piano*] You dont admire Mrs Bompas! You would never dream of writing poems to Mrs Bompas! My wife's not good enough for you, isnt she. [*Fiercely*] Who are you, pray, that you should be so jolly superior?

HE. Mr Bompas: I can make allowances for your jealousy—

HER HUSBAND. Jealousy! do you suppose I'm jealous of you? No, nor of ten like you. But if you think I'll stand here and let you insult my wife in her own house, youre mistaken.

HE [*very uncomfortable with his back against the piano and Teddy standing over him threateningly*] How can I convince you? Be reasonable. I tell you my relations with Mrs Bompas are relations of perfect coldness—of indifference—

HER HUSBAND [*scornfully*] Say it again : say it again. Youre proud of it, arnt you? Yah! youre not worth kicking.

Henry suddenly executes the feat known to pugilists as slipping, and changes sides with Teddy, who is now between Henry and the piano.

HE. Look here : I'm not going to stand this.

HER HUSBAND. Oh, you have some blood in your body after all! Good job!

HE. This is ridiculous. I assure you Mrs. Bompas is quite—

HER HUSBAND. What is Mrs Bompas to you, I'd like to know. I'll tell you what Mrs Bompas is. Shes the smartest woman in the smartest set in South Kensington, and the handsomest, and the cleverest, and the most fetching to experienced men who know a good thing when they see it, whatever she may be to conceited penny-a-lining puppies who think nothing good enough for them. It's admitted by the best people; and not to know it argues yourself unknown. Three of our first actor-managers have offered her a hundred a week if she'il go on the stage when they start a repertory theatre; and I think they know what theyre

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about as well as you. The only member of the present Cabinet that you might call a handsome man has neglected the business of the country to dance with her, though he dont belong to our set as a regular thing. One of the first professional poets in Bedford Park wrote a sonnet to her, worth all your amateur trash. At Ascot last season the eldest son of a duke excused himself from calling on me on the ground that his feelings for Mrs Bompas were not consistent with his duty to me as host; and it did him honor and me too. But [*with gathering fury*] she isnt good enough for you, it seems. You regard her with coldness, with indifference; and you have the cool cheek to tell me so to my face. For two pins I'd flatten your nose in to teach you manners. Introducing a fine woman to you is casting pearls before swine [*yelling at him*] before SWINE! d'ye hear?

HE [*with a deplorable lack of polish*] You call me a swine again and I'll land you one on the chin thatll make your head sing for a week.

HER HUSBAND [*exploding*] What—!

He charges at Henry with bull-like fury. Henry places himself on guard in the manner of a well taught boxer, and gets away smartly, but unfortunately forgets the stool which is just behind him. He falls backwards over it, unintentionally pushing it against the shins of Bompas, who falls forward over it. Mrs Bompas, with a scream, rushes into the room between the sprawling champions, and sits down on the floor in order to get her right arm round her husband's neck.

SHE. You shant, Teddy: you shant. You will be killed: he is a prizefighter.

HER HUSBAND [*vengefully*] I'll prizefight him. [*He struggles vainly to free himself from her embrace*].

SHE. Henry: dont let him fight you. Promise me that you wont.

HE [*ruefully*] I have got a most frightful bump on the back of my head. [*He tries to rise*].

SHE [*reaching out her left hand to seize his coat tail, and pulling him down again, whilst keeping fast hold of Teddy with the*

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other hand] Not until you have promised: not until you both have promised. [*Teddy tries to rise: she pulls him back again*]. Teddy: you promise, dont you? Yes, yes. Be good: you promise.

HER HUSBAND. I wont, unless he takes it back.

SHE. He will: he does. You take it back, Henry?—yes.

HE [*savagely*] Yes. I take it back. [*She lets go his coat. He gets up. So does Teddy*]. I take it all back, all, without reserve.

SHE [*on the carpet*] Is nobody going to help me up? [*They each take a hand and pull her up*]. Now wont you shake hands and be good?

HE [*recklessly*] I shall do nothing of the sort. I have steeped myself in lies for your sake; and the only reward I get is a lump on the back of my head the size of an apple. Now I will go back to the straight path.

SHE. Henry: for Heaven's sake—

HE. It's no use. Your husband is a fool and a brute—

HER HUSBAND. Whats that you say?

HE. I say you are a fool and a brute; and if youll step outside with me Ill say it again. [*Teddy begins to take off his coat for combat*]. Those poems were written to your wife, every word of them, and to nobody else. [*The scowl clears away from Bompas's countenance. Radiant, he replaces his coat*]. I wrote them because I loved her. I thought her the most beautiful woman in the world; and I told her so over and over again. I adored her: do your hear? I told her that you were a sordid commercial chump, utterly unworthy of her; and so you are.

HER HUSBAND [*so gratified, he can hardly believe his ears*] You dont mean it!

HE. Yes, I do mean it, and a lot more too. I asked Mrs Bompas to walk out of the house with me—to leave you—to get divorced from you and marry me. I begged and implored her to do it this very night. It was her refusal that ended everything between us. [*Looking very disparagingly at him*] What she can see in you, goodness only knows!

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HER HUSBAND [*beaming with remorse*] My dear chap, why didnt you say so before? I apologize. Come! dont bear malice: shake hands. Make him shake hands, Rory.

SHE. For my sake, Henry. After all, hes my husband. Forgive him. Take his hand. [*Henry, dazed, lets her take his hand and place it in Teddy's*].

HER HUSBAND [*shaking it heartily*] Youve got to own that none of your literary heroines can touch my Rory. [*He turns to her and claps her with fond pride on the shoulder*]. Eh, Rory? They cant resist you: none of em. Never knew a man yet that could hold out three days.

SHE. Dont be foolish, Teddy. I hope you were not really hurt, Henry. [*She feels the back of his head. He flinches*]. Oh, poor boy, what a bump! I must get some vinegar and brown paper. [*She goes to the bell and rings*].

HER HUSBAND. Will you do me a great favor, Apjohn. I hardly like to ask; but it would be a real kindness to us both.

HE. What can I do?

HER HUSBAND [*taking up the poems*] Well, may I get these printed? It shall be done in the best style. The finest paper, sumptuous binding, everything first class. Theyre beautiful poems. I should like to shew them about a bit.

SHE [*running back from the bell, delighted with the idea, and coming between them*] Oh Henry, if you wouldnt mind!

HE. Oh, I dont mind. I am past minding anything. I have grown too fast this evening.

SHE. How old are you, Henry?

HE. This morning I was eighteen. Now I am—confound it! I'm quoting that beast of a play [*he takes the Candida tickets out of his pocket and tears them up viciously*].

HER HUSBAND. What shall we call the volume? To Aurora, or something like that, eh?

HE. I should call it How He Lied to Her Husband.

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE

“Over Bashville the footman I howled with derision and delight. I dote on Bashville : I could read of him for ever : *de Bashville je suis le fervent* : there is only one Bashville ; and I am his devoted slave : Bashville est magnifique ; mais il n'est guère possible.”

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The Admirable Bashville;
or, Constancy Unrewarded:
being the Novel of Cashel
Byron's Profession done
into a Stage Play in Three
Acts and in Blank Verse. By
Bernard Shaw.

“Steal not this book for fear of shame.”

Constable and Company
Ltd. London: 1910.

*This play has been publicly performed within the United Kingdom. It is
entered at Stationers' Hall and The Library of Congress, U.S.A.*

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PREFACE

THE Admirable Bashville is a product of the British law of copyright. As that law stands at present, the first person who patches up a stage version of a novel, however worthless and absurd that version may be, and has it read by himself and a few confederates to another confederate who has paid for admission in a hall licensed for theatrical performances, secures the stage rights of that novel, even as against the author himself; and the author must buy him out before he can touch his own work for the purposes of the stage.

A famous case in point is the drama of East Lynne, adapted from the late Mrs Henry Wood's novel of that name. It was enormously popular, and is still the surest refuge of touring companies in distress. Many authors feel that Mrs Henry Wood was hardly used in not getting any of the money which was plentifully made in this way through her story. To my mind, since her literary copyright probably brought her a fair wage for the work of writing the book, her real grievance was, first, that her name and credit were attached to a play with which she had nothing to do, and which may quite possibly have been to her a detestable travesty and profanation of her story; and second, that the authors of

that play had the legal power to prevent her from having any version of her own performed, if she had wished to make one.

There is only one way in which the author can protect himself ; and that is by making a version of his own and going through the same legal farce with it. But the legal farce involves the hire of a hall and the payment of a fee of two guineas to the King's Reader of Plays. When I wrote *Cashel Byron's Profession* I had no guineas to spare, a common disability of young authors. What is equally common, I did not know the law. A reasonable man may guess a reasonable law ; but no man can guess a foolish anomaly. Fortunately, by the time my book so suddenly revived in America, I was aware of the danger, and in a position to protect myself by writing and performing *The Admirable Bashville*. The prudence of doing so was soon demonstrated ; for rumors soon reached me of several American stage versions ; and one of these has actually been played in New York, with the boxing scenes under the management (so it is stated) of the eminent pugilist Mr James Corbett. The New York press, in a somewhat derisive vein, conveyed the impression that in this version *Cashel Byron* sought to interest the public rather as the last of the noble race of the Byrons of Dorsetshire than as his unromantic self ; but in justice to a play which I never read, and an actor whom I never saw, and who honorably offered to treat me as if I had legal rights in the matter, I must not accept the newspaper evidence as conclusive.

As I write these words, I am promised by the King in his speech to Parliament a new Copyright Bill. I believe it embodies, in our British fashion, the recommendations of the book publishers as to the concerns of the authors, and the notions of the musical publishers as to the concerns of the playwrights. As author and play-

wright I am duly obliged to the Commission for saving me the trouble of speaking for myself, and to the witnesses for speaking for me. But unless Parliament takes the opportunity of giving the authors of all printed works of fiction, whether dramatic or narrative, both playwright and copyright (as in America), such to be independent of any insertions or omissions of formulas about "all rights reserved" or the like, I am afraid the new Copyright Bill will leave me with exactly the opinion both of the copyright law and the wisdom of Parliament I at present entertain. As a good Socialist I do not at all object to the limitation of my right of property in my own works to a comparatively brief period, followed by complete Communism: in fact, I cannot see why the same salutary limitation should not be applied to all property rights whatsoever; but a system which enables any alert sharper to acquire property rights in my stories as against myself and the rest of the community would, it seems to me, justify a rebellion if authors were numerous and warlike enough to make one.

It may be asked why I have written *The Admirable Bashville* in blank verse. My answer is that I had but a week to write it in. Blank verse is so childishly easy and expeditious (hence, by the way, Shakespeare's copious output), that by adopting it I was enabled to do within the week what would have cost me a month in prose.

Besides, I am fond of blank verse. Not nineteenth century blank verse, of course, nor indeed, with a very few exceptions, any post-Shakespearean blank verse. Nay, not Shakespearean blank verse itself later than the histories. When an author can write the prose dialogue of the first scene in *As You Like It*, or Hamlet's colloquies with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, there is really no excuse for *The Seven Ages* and "To be or

not to be," except the excuse of a haste that made great facility indispensable. I am quite sure that any one who is to recover the charm of blank verse must frankly go back to its beginnings and start a literary pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. I like the melodious sing-song, the clear simple one-line and two-line sayings, and the occasional rhymed tags, like the half closes in an eighteenth century symphony, in Peele, Kyd, Greene, and the histories of Shakespear. How any one with music in him can turn from Henry VI., John, and the two Richards to such a mess of verse half developed into rhetorical prose as *Cymbeline*, is to me explicable only by the uncivil hypothesis that the artistic qualities in the Elizabethan drama do not exist for most of its critics; so that they hang on to its purely prosaic content, and hypnotize themselves into absurd exaggerations of the value of that content. Even poets fall under the spell. Ben Jonson described Marlowe's line as "mighty"! As well put Michael Angelo's epitaph on the tombstone of Paolo Uccello. No wonder Jonson's blank verse is the most horribly disagreeable product in literature, and indicates his most prosaic mood as surely as his shorter rhymed measures indicate his poetic mood. Marlowe never wrote a mighty line in his life: Cowper's single phrase "Toll for the brave" drowns all his mightinesses as Great Tom drowns a military band. But Marlowe took that very pleasant-sounding rigmarole of Peele and Greene, and added to its sunny daylight the insane splendors of night, and the cheap tragedy of crime. Because he had only a common sort of brain, he was hopelessly beaten by Shakespear; but he had a fine ear and a soaring spirit: in short, one does not forget "wanton Arethusa's azure arms" and the like. But the pleasant-sounding rigmarole was the basis of the whole thing; and as long as that rigmarole was practised frankly for

the sake of its pleasantness, it was readable and speakable. It lasted until Shakespear did to it what Raphael did to Italian painting: that is, overcharged and burst it by making it the vehicle of a new order of thought, involving a mass of intellectual ferment and psychological research. The rigmarole could not stand the strain; and Shakespear's style ended in a chaos of half-shattered old forms, half-emancipated new ones, with occasional bursts of prose eloquence on the one hand, occasional delicious echoes of the rigmarole, mostly from Calibans and masque personages, on the other, with, alas! a great deal of filling up with formulary blank verse which had no purpose except to save the author's time and thought.

When a great man destroys an art form in this way, its ruins make palaces for the clever would-be great. After Michael Angelo and Raphael, Giulio Romano and the Carracci. After Marlowe and Shakespear, Chapman and the Police News poet Webster. Webster's speciality was blood: Chapman's, balderdash. Many of us by this time find it difficult to believe that pre-Ruskinite art criticism used to prostrate itself before the works of Domenichino and Guido, and to patronize the modest little beginnings of those who came between Cimabue and Masaccio. But we have only to look at our own current criticism of Elizabethan drama to satisfy ourselves that in an art which has not yet found its Ruskin or its pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the same folly is still academically propagated. It is possible, and even usual, for men professing to have ears and a sense of poetry to snub Peele and Greene and grovel before Fletcher and Webster—Fletcher! a facile blank verse penny-a-liner: Webster! a turgid paper cut-throat. The subject is one which I really cannot pursue without intemperance of language. The man who thinks *The Duchess of*

Malfi better than David and Bethsabe is outside the pale, not merely of literature, but almost of humanity.

Yet some of the worst of these post-Shakespearean duffers, from Jonson to Heywood, suddenly became poets when they turned from the big drum of pseudo-Shakespearean drama to the pipe and tabor of the masque, exactly as Shakespear himself recovered the old charm of the rigmarole when he turned from Prospero to Ariel and Caliban. Cyril Tourneur and Heywood could certainly have produced very pretty rigmarole plays if they had begun where Shakespear began, instead of trying to begin where he left off. Jonson and Beaumont would very likely have done themselves credit on the same terms: Marston would have had at least a chance. Massinger was in his right place, such as it was; and one can respect the gentle Shirley, who was never born to storm the footlights. Webster could have done no good anyhow or anywhere: the man was a fool. And Chapman would always have been a blathering unreadable pedant, like Landor, in spite of his classical amateurship and respectable strenuosity of character. But with these exceptions it may plausibly be held that if Marlowe and Shakespear could have been kept out of their way, the rest would have done well enough on the lines of Peele and Greene. However, they thought otherwise; and now that their freethinking paganism, so dazzling to the pupils of Paley and the converts of Wesley, offers itself in vain to the disciples of Darwin and Nietzsche, there is an end of them. And a good riddance, too.

Accordingly, I have poetasted The Admirable Bashville in the rigmarole style. And lest the Webster worshippers should declare that there is not a single correct line in all my three acts, I have stolen or paraphrased a few from Marlowe and Shakespear (not to mention Henry Carey); so that if any man dares

quote me derisively, he shall do so in peril of inadvertently lighting on a purple patch from Hamlet or Faustus.

I have also endeavored in this little play to prove that I am not the heartless creature some of my critics take me for. I have strictly observed the established laws of stage popularity and probability. I have simplified the character of the heroine, and summed up her sweetness in the one sacred word: Love. I have given consistency to the heroism of Cashel. I have paid to Morality, in the final scene, the tribute of poetic justice. I have restored to Patriotism its usual place on the stage, and gracefully acknowledged The Throne as the fountain of social honor. I have paid particular attention to the construction of the play, which will be found equal in this respect to the best contemporary models.

And I trust the result will be found satisfactory.

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE ; OR,
CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

ACT I

A glade in Wiltstoken Park

Enter LYDIA

LYDIA. Ye leafy breasts and warm protecting wings
Of mother trees that hatch our tender souls,
And from the well of Nature in our hearts
Thaw the intolerable inch of ice
That bears the weight of all the stamping world,
Hear ye me sing to solitude that I,
Lydia Carew, the owner of these lands,
Albeit most rich, most learned, and most wise,
Am yet most lonely. What are riches worth
When wisdom with them comes to show the purse
bearer
That life remains unpurchasable ? Learning
Learns but one lesson : doubt ! To excel all
Is, to be lonely. Oh, ye busy birds,
Engrossed with real needs, ye shameless trees

With arms outspread in welcome of the sun,
Your minds, bent singly to enlarge your lives,
Have given you wings and raised your delicate heads
High heavens above us crawlers.

[*A rook sets up a great cawing; and the other birds chatter loudly as a gust of wind sets the branches swaying. She makes as though she would shew them her sleeves.*

Lo, the leaves

That hide my drooping boughs! Mock me—poor maid!—
Deride with joyous comfortable chatter
These stolen feathers. Laugh at me, the clothed
one.

Laugh at the mind fed on foul air and books.
Books! Art! And Culture! Oh, I shall go mad.
Give me a mate that never heard of these,
A sylvan god, tree born in heart and sap;
Or else, eternal maidhood be my hap.

[*Another gust of wind and bird-chatter. She sits on the mossy root of an oak and buries her face in her hands.*

CASHEL BYRON, in a white singlet and breeches, comes through the trees.

CASHEL. Whats this? Whom have we here? A woman!

LYDIA [*looking up*]

Yes.

CASHEL. You have no business here. I have. Away!
Women distract me. Hence!

LYDIA.

Bid you me hence?

I am upon mine own ground. Who are you?
I take you for a god, a sylvan god.
This place is mine: I share it with the birds,
The trees, the sylvan gods, the lovely company
Of haunted solitudes.

CASHEL.

A sylvan god!

A goat-eared image! Do your statues speak?

Walk ? heave the chest with breath ? or like a feather
Lift you—like this ? [*He sets her on her feet.*]

LYDIA [*panting*] You take away my breath !
Youre strong. Your hands off, please. Thank you.
Farewell.

CASHEL. Before you go : when shall we meet again ?

LYDIA. Why should we meet again ?

CASHEL. Who knows ? We shall.

That much I know by instinct. Whats your name ?

LYDIA. Lydia Carew.

CASHEL. Lydia's a pretty name.

Where do you live ?

LYDIA. I' the castle.

CASHEL [*thunderstruck*] Do not say

You are the lady of this great domain.

LYDIA. I am.

CASHEL. Accursed luck ! I took you for
The daughter of some farmer. Well, your pardon.

I came too close : I looked too deep. Farewell.

LYDIA. I pardon that. Now tell me who you are.

CASHEL. Ask me not whence I come, nor what
I am.

You are the lady of the castle. I

Have but this hard and blackened hand to live by.

LYDIA. I have felt its strength and envied you. Your
name ?

I have told you mine.

CASHEL. My name is Cashel Byron.

LYDIA. I never heard the name ; and yet you utter it

As men announce a celebrated name.

Forgive my ignorance.

CASHEL. I bless it, Lydia.

I have forgot your other name.

LYDIA. Carew.

Cashel's a pretty name too.

MELLISH [*calling through the wood*] Coo-ee! Byron!

CASHEL. A thousand curses! Oh, I beg you, go.

This is a man you must not meet.

MELLISH [*further off*] Coo-ee!

LYDIA. He's losing us. What does he in my woods?

CASHEL. He is a part of what I am. What that is

You must not know. It would end all between us.

And yet there's no dishonor in't: your lawyer,

Who let your lodge to me, will vouch me honest.

I am ashamed to tell you what I am—

At least, as yet. Some day, perhaps.

MELLISH [*nearer*] Coo-ee!

LYDIA. His voice is nearer. Fare you well, my tenant.

When next your rent falls due, come to the castle.

Pay me in person. Sir: your most obedient.

[*She curtsies and goes.*]

CASHEL. Lives in this castle! Owns this park! A lady

Marry a prizefighter! Impossible.

And yet the prizefighter must marry her.

Enter MELLISH

Ensanguined swine, whelped by a doggish dam,
Is this thy park, that thou, with voice obscene,
Fillst it with yodeled yells, and screamst my name
For all the world to know that Cashel Byron
Is training here for combat.

MELLISH. Swine you me?

I've caught you, have I? You have found a woman.

Let her shew here again, I'll set the dog on her.

I will. I say it. And my name's Bob Mellish.

CASHEL. Change thy initial and be truly high
Hellish. As for thy dog, why dost thou keep one
And bark thyself? Begone.

MELLISH.

I'll not begone.

You shall come back with me and do your duty—

Your duty to your backers, do you hear?

You have not punched the bag this blessed day.

CASHEL. The putrid bag engirdled by thy belt
Invites my fist.

MELLISH [*weeping*] Ingrate! O wretched lot!
Who would a trainer be? O Mellish, Mellish,
Trainer of heroes, builder-up of brawn,
Vicarious victor, thou createst champions
That quickly turn thy tyrants. But beware:
Without me thou art nothing. Disobey me,
And all thy boasted strength shall fall from thee.
With flaccid muscles and with failing breath
Facing the fist of thy more faithful foe,
I'll see thee on the grass cursing the day
Thou didst forswear thy training.

CASHEL.

Noisome quack

That canst not from thine own abhorrent visage

Take one carbuncle, thou contaminat'st

Even with thy presence my untainted blood.

Preach abstinence to rascals like thyself

Rotten with surfeiting. Leave me in peace.

This grove is sacred: thou profanest it.

Hence! I have business that concerns thee not.

MELLISH. Ay, with your woman. You will lose your
fight.

Have you forgot your duty to your backers?

Oh, what a sacred thing your duty is!

What makes a man but duty? Where were we

Without our duty? Think of Nelson's words:

England expects that every man——

CASHEL.

Shall twaddle

About his duty. Mellish: at no hour

Can I regard thee wholly without loathing;

But when thou playst the moralist, by Heaven,
My soul flies to my fist, my fist to thee;
And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall
On Mars's armor—but enough of that.
It does remind me of my mother.

MELLISH. Ah,
Byron, let it remind thee. Once I heard
An old song : it ran thus. [*He clears his throat*] Ahem,
Ahem !

[*Sings*]—They say there is no other
Can take the place of mother—
I am out o' voice : forgive me ; but remember :
Thy mother—were that sainted woman here—
Would say, Obey thy trainer.

CASHEL. Now, by Heaven,
Some fate is pushing thee upon thy doom.
Canst thou not hear thy sands as they run out ?
They thunder like an avalanche. Old man :
Two things I hate, my duty and my mother.
Why dost thou urge them both upon me now ?
Presume not on thine age and on thy nastiness.
Vanish, and promptly.

MELLISH. Can I leave thee here
Thus thinly clad, exposed to vernal dews ?
Come back with me, my son, unto our lodge.

CASHEL. Within this breast a fire is newly lit
Whose glow shall sun the dew away, whose radiance
Shall make the orb of night hang in the heavens
Unnoticed, like a glow-worm at high noon.

MELLISH. Ah me, ah me, where wilt thou spend the
night ?

CASHEL. Wiltstoken's windows wandering beneath,
Wiltstoken's holy bell hearkening,
Wiltstoken's lady loving breathlessly.

MELLISH. The lady of the castle ! Thou art mad.

CASHEL. Tis thou art mad to trifle in my path.
Thwart me no more. Begone.

MELLISH. My boy, my son,
I'd give my heart's blood for thy happiness.
Thwart thee, my son ! Ah no. I'll go with thee.
I'll brave the dews. I'll sacrifice my sleep.
I am old—no matter : ne'er shall it be said
Mellish deserted thee.

CASHEL. You resolute gods
That will not spare this man, upon your knees
Take the disparity twixt his age and mine.
Now from the ring to the high judgment seat
I step at your behest. Bear you me witness
This is not Victory, but Execution.

[He solemnly projects his fist with colossal force against the waistcoat of Mellish, who doubles up like a folded towel, and lies without sense or motion.

And now the night is beautiful again.

[The castle clock strikes the hour in the distance.
Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark!
Hark! Hark! Hark!

It strikes in poetry. 'Tis ten o'clock.

Lydia : to thee !

[*He steals off towards the castle. MELLISH stirs and groans.*]

ACT II

SCENE I

London. A room in Lydia's house

Enter LYDIA *and* LUCIAN

LYDIA. Welcome, dear cousin, to my London house. Of late you have been chary of your visits.

LUCIAN. I have been greatly occupied of late.
'The minister to whom I act as scribe
In Downing Street was born in Birmingham,
And, like a thoroughbred commercial statesman,
Splits his infinitives, which I, poor slave,
Must reunite, though all the time my heart
Yearns for my gentle coz's company.

LYDIA. Lucian : there is some other reason. Think !
Since England was a nation every mood
Her scribes have prepositionally split ;
But thine avoidance dates from yestermoonth.

LUCIAN. There is a man I like not haunts this house.

LYDIA. Thou speakst of Cashel Byron ?

LUCIAN. Aye, of him.

Hast thou forgotten that eventful night
When as we gathered were at Hoskyn House
To hear a lecture by Herr Abendgasse,
He placed a single finger on my chest,
And I, ensorceled, would have sunk supine
Had not a chair received my falling form.

LYDIA. Pooh ! That was but by way of illustration.

LUCIAN. What right had he to illustrate his point
Upon my person ? Was I his assistant
That he should try experiments on me
As Simpson did on his with chloroform ?
Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo
He hath unmanned me : all my nerve is gone.
This very morning my official chief,
Tapping with friendly forefinger this button,
Levelled me like a thunderstricken elm
Flat upon the Colonial Office floor.

LYDIA. Fancies, coz.

LUCIAN. Fancies ! Fits ! the chief said fits !
Delirium tremens ! the chlorotic dance
Of Vitus ! What could any one have thought ?

All England for these thrilling paragraphs
A week has waited breathless.

LYDIA.

Read them us.

BASHVILLE [*reading*] "At noon to-day, unknown to
the police,
Within a thousand miles of Wormwood Scrubbs,
Th' Australian Champion and his challenger,
The Flying Dutchman, formerly engaged
I' the mercantile marine, fought to a finish.
Lord Worthington, the well-known sporting peer
Acted as referee."

LYDIA.

Lord Worthington !

BASHVILLE. "The bold Ned Skene revisited the
ropes
To hold the bottle for his quondam novice ;
Whilst in the seaman's corner were assembled
Professor Palmer and the Chelsea Snob.
Mellish, whose epigastrium has been hurt,
Tis said, by accident at Wiltstoken,
Looked none the worse in the Australian's corner.
The Flying Dutchman wore the Union Jack :
His colors freely sold amid the crowd ;
But Cashel's well-known spot of white on blue——"

LYDIA. Whose, did you say ?

BASHVILLE. Cashel's, my lady.

LYDIA.

Lucian :

Your hand—a chair—

BASHVILLE.

Madam : youre ill.

LYDIA.

Proceed.

What you have read I do not understand ;
Yet I will hear it through. Proceed.

LUCIAN.

Proceed.

BASHVILLE. "But Cashel's well-known spot of white
on blue
Was fairly rushed for. Time was called at twelve,

When, with a smile of confidence upon
His ocean-beaten mug—— ”

LYDIA. His mug ?

LUCIAN [*explaining*] His face.

BASHVILLE [*continuing*] “ The Dutchman came undaunted to the scratch,

But found the champion there already. Both
Most heartily shook hands, amid the cheers
Of their encouraged backers. Two to one
Was offered on the Melbourne nonpareil ;
And soon, so fit the Flying Dutchman seemed,
Found takers everywhere. No time was lost
In getting to the business of the day.
The Dutchman led at once, and seemed to land
On Byron's dicebox ; but the seaman's reach,
Too short for execution at long shots,
Did not get fairly home upon the ivory ;
And Byron had the best of the exchange.”

LYDIA. I do not understand. What were they doing ?

LUCIAN. Fighting with naked fists.

LYDIA. Oh, horrible !

I'll hear no more. Or stay : how did it end ?
Was Cashel hurt ?

LUCIAN [*to BASHVILLE*] Skip to the final round.

BASHVILLE. “ Round Three : the rumors that had gone about

Of a breakdown in Byron's recent training
Seemed quite confirmed. Upon the call of time
He rose, and, looking anything but cheerful,
Proclaimed with every breath Bellows to Mend.
At this point six to one was freely offered
Upon the Dutchman ; and Lord Worthington
Plunged at this figure till he stood to lose
A fortune should the Dutchman, as seemed certain,
Take down the number of the Panley boy.

The Dutchman, glutton as we know he is,
Seemed this time likely to go hungry. Cashel
Was clearly groggy as he slipped the sailor,
Who, not to be denied, followed him up,
Forcing the fighting mid tremendous cheers."

LYDIA. Oh stop—no more—or tell the worst at once.
I'll be revenged. Bashville: call the police.
This brutal sailor shall be made to know
There's law in England.

LUCIAN. Do not interrupt him:
Mine ears are thirsting. Finish, man. What next?

BASHVILLE. "Forty to one, the Dutchman's friends
exclaimed.

Done, said Lord Worthington, who shewed himself
A sportsman every inch. Barely the bet
Was booked, when, at the reeling champion's jaw
The sailor, bent on winning out of hand,
Sent in his right. The issue seemed a cert,
When Cashel, ducking smartly to his left,
Cross-counter'd like a hundredweight of brick——"

LUCIAN. Death and damnation!

LYDIA. Oh, what does it mean?

BASHVILLE. "The Dutchman went to grass, a beaten
man."

LYDIA. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Oh, well done,
Cashel!

BASHVILLE. "A scene of indescribable excitement
Ensued; for it was now quite evident
That Byron's grogginess had all along
Been feigned to make the market for his backers.
We trust this sample of colonial smartness
Will not find imitators on this side.
The losers settled up like gentlemen;
But many felt that Byron shewed bad taste
In taking old Ned Skene upon his back,

And, with Bob Mellish tucked beneath his oxter,
Sprinting a hundred yards to show the crowd
The perfect pink of his condition"—[*a knock*].

LYDIA [*turning pale*] Bashville
Didst hear? A knock.

BASHVILLE. Madam: tis Byron's knock.
Shall I admit him?

LUCIAN. Reeking from the ring!
Oh, monstrous! Say you're out.

LYDIA. Send him away.
I will not see the wretch. How dare he keep
Secrets from ME? I'll punish him. Pray say
I'm not at home. [BASHVILLE *turns to go.*] Yet stay.
I am afraid

He will not come again.

LUCIAN. A consummation
Devoutly to be wished by any lady.
Pray, do you wish this man to come again?

LYDIA. No, Lucian. He hath used me very ill.
He should have told me. I will ne'er forgive him.
Say, Not at home.

BASHVILLE. Yes, madam. [*Exit.*]

LYDIA Stay—

LUCIAN [*stopping her*] No, Lydia:

You shall not countermand that proper order.
Oh, would you cast the treasure of your mind,
The thousands at your bank, and, above all,
Your unassailable social position
Before this soulless mass of beef and brawn.

LYDIA. Nay, coz: you're prejudiced.

CASHEL [*without*] Liar and slave!

LYDIA. What words were those?

LUCIAN. The man is drunk with slaughter.

Enter BASHVILLE running : he shuts the door and locks it.

BASHVILLE. Save yourselves : at the staircase foot the champion

Sprawls on the mat, by trick of wrestler tripped ;
But when he rises, woe betide us all !

LYDIA. Who bade you treat my visitor with violence ?

BASHVILLE. He would not take my answer ; thrust the door

Back in my face ; gave me the lie i' th' throat ;
Averred he felt your presence in his bones.
I said he should feel mine there too, and felled him ;
Then fled to bar your door.

LYDIA. O lover's instinct !
He felt my presence. Well, let him come in.
We must not fail in courage with a fighter.
Unlock the door.

LUCIAN. Stop. Like all women, Lydia,
You have the courage of immunity.
To strike you were against his code of honor ;
But me, above the belt, he may perform on
T' th' height of his profession. Also Bashville.

BASHVILLE. Think not of me, sir. Let him do his worst.

Oh, if the valor of my heart could weigh
The fatal difference twixt his weight and mine,
A second battle should he do this day :
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my mistress
Give me the word : instant I'll take him on
Here—now—at catchweight. Better bite the carpet
A man, than fly, a coward.

LUCIAN. Bravely said :
I will assist you with the poker.

LYDIA. No :
I will not have him touched. Open the door.

BASHVILLE. Destruction knocks thereat. I smile, and
open.

[BASHVILLE opens the door. Dead silence. CASHEL enters, in tears. A solemn pause.

CASHEL. You know my secret?

LYDIA. Yes.

CASHEL. And thereupon

You bade your servant fling me from your door.

LYDIA. I bade my servant say I was not here.

CASHEL [*to BASHVILLE*] Why didst thou better thy instruction, man?

Hadst thou but said, "She bade me tell thee this,"

Thoudst burst my heart. I thank thee for thy
mercy.

LYDIA. Oh, Lucian, didst thou call him "drunk with slaughter"?

Canst thou refrain from weeping at his woe?

CASHEL [to LUCIAN] The unwritten law that shields the amateur

Against professional resentment, saves thee.

O coward, to traduce behind their backs

Defenceless prizefighters !

LUCIAN. Thou dost avow

Thou art a prizefighter.

CASHEL. It was my glory.

I had hoped to offer to my lady there

My belts, my championships, my heaped-up stakes,

My undefeated record ; but I knew

Behind their blaze a hateful secret lurked.

LYDIA. Another secret ?

LUCIAN. Is there worse to come?

CASHEL. Know ye not then my mother is an actress?

LUCIAN. How horrible !

LYDIA. Nay, nay : how interesting !

CASHEL. A thousand victories cannot wipe out

That birthstain. Oh, my speech bewrayeth it :
My earliest lesson was the player's speech
In Hamlet ; and to this day I express myself
More like a mobled queen than like a man
Of flesh and blood. Well may your cousin sneer !
What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba ?

LUCIAN. Injurious upstart : if by Hecuba
Thou pointest darkly at my lovely cousin,
Know that she is to me, and I to her,
What never canst thou be. I do defy thee ;
And maugre all the odds thy skill doth give,
Outside I will await thee.

LYDIA. I forbid
Expressly any such duello. Bashville :
The door. Put Mr Webber in a hansom,
And bid the driver hie to Downing Street.
No answer : tis my will.

[*Exeunt LUCIAN and BASHVILLE.*

And now, farewell.

You must not come again, unless indeed
You can some day look in my eyes and say :
Lydia : my occupation's gone.

CASHEL. Ah no :
It would remind you of my wretched mother.
O God, let me be natural a moment !
What other occupation can I try ?
What would you have me be ?

LYDIA. A gentleman.

CASHEL. A gentleman ! I, Cashel Byron, stoop
To be the thing that bets on me ! the fool
I flatter at so many coins a lesson !
The screaming creature who beside the ring
Gambles with basest wretches for my blood,
And pays with money that he never earned !
Let me die broken hearted rather !

LYDIA.

But

You need not be an idle gentleman.
I call you one of Nature's gentlemen.

CASHEL. Thats the collection for the loser, Lydia.
I am not wont to need it. When your friends
Contest elections, and at foot o' th' poll
Rue their presumption, tis their wont to claim
A moral victory. In a sort they are
Nature's M.P.s. I am not yet so threadbare
As to accept these consolation stakes.

LYDIA. You are offended with me.

CASHEL.

Yes I am.

I can put up with much ; but—"Nature's gentleman"!
I thank your ladyship of Lyons, but
Must beg to be excused.

LYDIA.

But surely, surely,
To be a prizefighter, and maul poor mariners
With naked knuckles, is no work for you.

CASHEL. Thou dost arraign the inattentive Fates
That weave my thread of life in ruder patterns
Than these that lie, antimacassarly,
Asprent thy drawingroom. As well demand
Why I at birth chose to begin my life
A speechless babe, hairless, incontinent,
Hobbling upon all fours, a nurse's nuisance?
Or why I do propose to lose my strength,
To blanch my hair, to let the gums recede
Far up my yellowing teeth, and finally
Lie down and moulder in a rotten grave?
Only one thing more foolish could have been,
And that was to be born, not man, but woman.
This was thy folly, why rebuk'st thou mine?

LYDIA. These are not things of choice.

CASHEL.

And did I choose

My quick divining eye, my lightning hand,

My springing muscle and untiring heart ?
Did I implant the instinct in the race
That found a use for these, and said to me,
Fight for us, and be fame and fortune thine ?

LYDIA. But there are other callings in the world.

CASHEL. Go tell thy painters to turn stockbrokers,
Thy poet friends to stoop oer merchants' desks
And pen prose records of the gains of greed.
Tell bishops that religion is outworn,
And that the Pampa to the horsebreaker
Opes new careers. Bid the professor quit
His fraudulent pedantries, and do i' the world
The thing he would teach others. Then return
To me and say : Cashel : they have obeyed ;
And on that pyre of sacrifice I, too,
Will throw my championship.

LYDIA. But tis so cruel.

CASHEL. Is it so ? I have hardly noticed that,
So cruel are all callings. Yet this hand,
That many a two days bruise hath ruthless given,
Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty years,
Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport.
I am too squeamish for your dainty world,
That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,
The world that robs the poor, and with their spoil
Does what its tradesmen tell it. Oh, your ladies !
Sealskinned and egret-feathered ; all defiance
To Nature ; cowering if one say to them
"What will the servants think ?" Your gentlemen !
Your tailor-tyrannized visitors of whom
Flutter of wing and singing in the wood
Make chickenbutchers. And your medicine men !
Groping for cures in the tormented entrails
Of friendly dogs. Pray have you asked all these
To change their occupations ? Find you mine

Until a thousand solid pounds be staked.
His friends have confidently found the money.
Ere fall of leaf that money shall be mine ;
And then I shall possess ten thousand pounds.
I had hoped to tempt thee with that monstrous sum.

LYDIA. Thou silly Cashel, tis but a week's income.
I did propose to give thee three times that
For pocket money when we two were wed.

CASHEL. Give me my hat. I have been fooling here.
Now, by the Hebrew lawgiver, I thought
That only in America such revenues
Were decent deemed. Enough. My dream is dreamed.
Your gold weighs like a mountain on my chest.
Farewell.

LYDIA. The golden mountain shall be thine
The day thou quitst thy horrible profession.

CASHEL. Tempt me not, woman. It is honor calls.
Slave to the Ring I rest until the face
Of Paradise be changed.

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE. Madam, your carriage,
Ordered by you at two. 'Tis now half-past.

CASHEL. Sdeath ! is it half-past two ? The king ! the
king !

LYDIA. The king ! What mean you ?

CASHEL. I must meet a monarch
This very afternoon at Islington.

LYDIA. At Islington ! You must be mad.

CASHEL. A cab !
Go call a cab ; and let a cab be called ;
And let the man that calls it be thy footman.

LYDIA. You are not well. You shall not go alone.
My carriage waits. I must accompany you.
I go to find my hat.

[*Exit.*

CASHEL. Like Paracelsus,
Who went to find his soul. [To BASHVILLE.] And now,
 young man,
How comes it that a fellow of your inches,
So deft a wrestler and so bold a spirit,
Can stoop to be a flunkey? Call on me
On your next evening out. I'll make a man of you.
Surely you are ambitious and aspire——

BASHVILLE. To be a butler and draw corks; wherefore,
By Heaven, I will draw yours.

[He hits CASHEL on the nose, and runs out.]

CASHEL [thoughtfully putting the side of his forefinger
to his nose, and studying the blood on it] Too quick
for me!

There's money in this youth.

Re-enter LYDIA, hatted and gloved

LYDIA. O Heaven! you bleed.

CASHEL. Lend me a key or other frigid object,
That I may put it down my back, and staunch
The welling life stream.

LYDIA [giving him her keys] Oh, what have you
done?

CASHEL. Flush on the boko napped your footman's
left.

LYDIA. I do not understand.

CASHEL. True. Pardon me.

I have received a blow upon the nose
In sport from Bashville. Next, ablution; else
I shall be total gules. [He hurries out.]

LYDIA. How well he speaks!
There is a silver trumpet in his lips
That stirs me to the finger ends. His nose
Dropt lovely color: tis a perfect blood.
I would twere mingled with mine own!

Enter BASHVILLE

What now ?

BASHVILLE. Madam, the coachman can no longer wait :
The horses will take cold.

LYDIA. I do beseech him
A moment's grace. Oh, mockery of wealth !
The third class passenger unhidden rides
Whither and when he will : obsequious trams
Await him hourly : subterranean tubes
With tireless coursers whisk him through the town ;
But we, the rich, are slaves to Houyhnhnms :
We wait upon their colds, and frowst all day
Indoors, if they but cough or spurn their hay.

BASHVILLE. Madam, an omnibus to Euston Road,
And thence t' th' Angel—

Enter CASHEL

LYDIA. Let us haste, my love :
The coachman is impatient.

CASHEL. Did he guess
He stays for Cashel Byron, he'd outwait
Pompei's sentinel. Let us away.
This day of deeds, as yet but half begun,
Must ended be in merrie Islington.

[*Exeunt LYDIA and CASHEL.*]

BASHVILLE. Gods ! how she hangs on's arm ! I am
alone.
Now let me lift the cover from my soul.
O wasted humbleness ! Deluded diffidence !
How often have I said, Lie down, poor footman :
She'll never stoop to thee, rear as thou wilt
Thy powder to the sky. And now, by Heaven,

She stoops below me ; condescends upon
This hero of the pothouse, whose exploits,
Writ in my character from my last place,
Would damn me into ostlerdom. And yet
There's an eternal justice in it ; for
By so much as the ne'er subdued Indian
Excels the servile negro, doth this ruffian
Precedence take of me. "*Ich dien.*" Damnation !
I serve. My motto should have been, "I scalp."
And yet I do not bear the yoke for gold.
Because I love her I have blacked her boots ;
Because I love her I have cleaned her knives,
Doing in this the office of a boy,
Whilst, like the celebrated maid that milks
And does the meanest chares, I've shared the passions
Of Cleopatra. It has been my pride
To give her place the greater altitude
By lowering mine, and of her dignity
To be so jealous that my cheek has flamed
Even at the thought of such a deep disgrace
As love for such a one as I would be
For such a one as she ; and now ! and now !
A prizefighter ! O irony ! O bathos !
To have made way for this ! Oh, Bashville, Bashville :
Why hast thou thought so lowly of thyself,
So heavenly high of her ? Let what will come,
My love must speak : twas my respect was dumb.

SCENE II

The Agricultural Hall in Islington, crowded with spectators. In the arena a throne, with a boxing ring before it. A balcony above on the right, occupied

*by persons of fashion: among others, LYDIA and
LORD WORTHINGTON.*

*Flourish. Enter LUCIAN and CETEWAYO, with Chiefs
in attendance.*

CETEWAYO. Is this the Hall of Husbandmen?

LUCIAN.

It is.

CETEWAYO. Are these anæmic dogs the English
people?

LUCIAN. Mislike us not for our complexions,
The pallid liveries of the pall of smoke
Belched by the mighty chimneys of our factories,
And by the million patent kitchen ranges
Of happy English homes.

CETEWAYO. When first I came
I deemed those chimneys the fuliginous altars
Of some infernal god. I now perceive
The English dare not look upon the sky.
They are moles and owls: they call upon the soot
To cover them.

LUCIAN. You cannot understand
The greatness of this people, Cetewayo.
You are a savage, reasoning like a child.
Each pallid English face conceals a brain
Whose powers are proven in the works of Newton
And in the plays of the immortal Shakespear.
There is not one of all the thousands here
But, if you placed him naked in the desert,
Would presently construct a steam engine,
And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes.

CETEWAYO. Have I been brought a million miles by
sea
To learn how men can lie! Know, Father Webber,
Men become civilized through twin diseases,

Terror and Greed to wit : these two conjoined
Become the grisly parents of Invention.
Why does the trembling white with frantic toil
Of hand and brain produce the magic gun
That slays a mile off, whilst the manly Zulu
Dares look his foe i' the face ; fights foot to foot ;
Lives in the present ; drains the Here and Now ;
Makes life a long reality, and death
A moment only ; whilst your Englishman
Glares on his burning candle's winding-sheets,
Counting the steps of his approaching doom,
And in the murky corners ever sees
Two horrid shadows, Death and Poverty :
In the which anguish an unnatural edge
Comes on his frightened brain, which straight devises
Strange frauds by which to filch unearned gold,
Mad crafts by which to slay unfacéd foes,
Until at last his agonized desire
Makes possibility its slave. And then—
Horrible climax ! All-undoing spite !—
Th' importunate clutching of the coward's hand
From wearied Nature Devastation's secrets
Doth wrest ; when straight the brave black-livered man
Is blown explosively from off the globe ;
And Death and Dread, with their white-livered slaves
Oer-run the earth, and through their chattering teeth
Stammer the words "Survival of the Fittest."
Enough of this : I came not here to talk.
Thou sayst thou hast two white-faced ones who dare
Fight without guns, and spearless, to the death.
Let them be brought.

LUCIAN.

They fight not to the death,
But under strictest rules : as, for example,
Half of their persons shall not be attacked ;
Nor shall they suffer blows when they fall down,

Nor stroke of foot at any time. And, further,
That frequent opportunities of rest
With succor and refreshment be secured them.

CETEWAYO. Ye gods, what cowards! Zululand, my
Zululand:

Personified Pusillanimity
Hath taen thee from the bravest of the brave!

LUCIAN. Lo the rude savage whose untutored mind
Cannot perceive self-evidence, and doubts
That Brave and English mean the self-same thing!

CETEWAYO. Well, well, produce these heroes. I sur-
mise
They will be carried by their nurses, lest
Some barking dog or bumbling bee should scare them.

CETEWAYO *takes his state.* Enter PARADISE

LYDIA. What hateful wretch is this whose mighty
thews
Presage destruction to his adversaries.

LORD WORTHINGTON. Tis Paradise,

LYDIA. He of whom Cashel spoke?
A dreadful thought ices my heart. Oh, why
Did Cashel leave us at the door?

Enter CASHEL

LORD WORTHINGTON. Behold!
The champion comes.

LYDIA. Oh, I could kiss him now
Here, before all the world. His boxing things
Render him most attractive. But I fear
Yon villain's fists may maul him.

WORTHINGTON. Have no fear.
Hark! the king speaks.

CETEWAYO. Ye sons of the white queen :
Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to.

PARADISE. Your royal highness, you beholds a bloke
What gets his living honest by his fists.
I may not have the polish of some toffs
As I could mention on ; but up to now
No man has took my number down. I scale
Close on twelve stun ; my age is twenty-three ;
And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub
Am to be heard of any day by such
As likes the job. I dont know, governor,
As ennythink remains for me to say.

CETEWAYO. Six wives and thirty oxen shalt thou have
If on the sand thou leave thy foeman dead.
Methinks he looks full scornfully on thee.
[To CASHEL] Ha ! dost thou not so ?

CASHEL. Sir, I do beseech you
To name the bone, or limb, or special place
Where you would have me hit him with this fist.

CETEWAYO. Thou hast a noble brow ; but much I
fear
Thine adversary will disfigure it.

CASHEL. There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will. Give me the gloves.

THE MASTER OF THE REVELS. Paradise, a professor.
Cashel Byron,
Also professor. Time ! [*They spar.*

LYDIA. Eternity
It seems to me until this fight be done.

CASHEL. Dread monarch : this is called the upper
cut,
And this a hook-hit of mine own invention.
The hollow region where I plant this blow
Is called the mark. My left, you will observe,
I chiefly use for long shots : with my right

Aiming beside the angle of the jaw
And landing with a certain delicate screw
I without violence knock my foeman out.
Mark how he falls forward upon his face !
The rules allow ten seconds to get up ;
And as the man is still quite silly, I
Might safely finish him ; but my respect
For your most gracious majesty's desire
To see some further triumphs of the science
Of self-defence postpones awhile his doom.

PARADISE. How can a bloke do hisself proper justice
With pillows on his fists ?

*[He tears off his gloves and attacks CASHEL
with his bare knuckles.]*

THE CROWD. Unfair ! The rules !

CETEWAYO. The joy of battle surges boiling up
And bids me join the mellay. Isandhlana
And Victory ! *[He falls on the bystanders.]*

THE CHIEFS. Victory and Isandhlana !
*[They run amok. General panic and stampede.
The ring is swept away.]*

LUCIAN. Forbear these most irregular proceedings.
Police ! Police !

*[He engages CETEWAYO with his umbrella. The balcony
comes down with a crash. Screams from its occupants.
Indescribable confusion.]*

CASHIEL *[dragging LYDIA from the struggling heap]* My
love, my love, art hurt ?

LYDIA. No, no ; but save my sore oermatchéd cousin.

A POLICEMAN. Give us a lead, sir. Save the English
flag.

Africa tramples on it.

CASHIEL. Africa !

Not all the continents whose mighty shoulders
The dancing diamonds of the seas bedeck

Shall trample on the blue with spots of white.

Now, Lydia, mark thy lover. [*He charges the Zulus.*]

LYDIA. Hercules

Cannot withstand him. See : the king is down ;

The tallest chief is up, heels over head,

Tossed corklike oer my Cashel's sinewy back ;

And his lieutenant all deflated gasps

For breath upon the sand. The others fly

In vain : his fist oer magic distances

Like a chameleon's tongue shoots to its mark ;

And the last African upon his knees

Sues piteously for quarter. [*Rushing into CASHEL's arms*]

Oh, my hero :

Thoust saved us all this day.

CASHEL. Twas all for thee.

CETEWAYO [*trying to rise*] Have I been struck by lightning?

LUCIAN. Sir, your conduct

Can only be described as most ungentlemanly.

POLICEMAN. One of the prone is white.

CASHEL. Tis Paradise.

POLICEMAN. He's choking: he has something in his mouth.

LYDIA [*to CASHEL*] Oh Heaven! there is blood upon
your hip.

Yours hurt.

CASHEL. The morsel in yon wretch's mouth

Was bitten out of me.

[Sensation. LYDIA screams and swoons in CASHEL'S arms.

ACT III

Wiltstoken. A room in the Warren Lodge

LYDIA at her writing table

LYDIA. O Past and Present, how ye do conflict
As here I sit writing my father's life !
The autumn woodland woos me from without
With whispering of leaves and dainty airs
To leave this fruitless haunting of the past.
My father was a very learned man.
I sometimes think I shall oldmaided be
Ere I unlearn the things he taught to me.

Enter POLICEMAN

POLICEMAN. Asking your ladyship to pardon me
For this intrusion, might I be so bold
As ask a question of your people here
Concerning the Queen's peace ?

LYDIA. My people here
Are but a footman and a simple maid ;
And both have craved a holiday to join
Some local festival. But, sir, your helmet
Proclaims the Metropolitan Police.

POLICEMAN. Madam, it does ; and I may now inform
you
That what you term a local festival
Is a most hideous outrage gainst the law,
Which we to quell from London have come down :

In short, a prizefight. My sole purpose here
Is to inquire whether your ladyship
Any bad characters this afternoon
Has noted in the neighborhood.

LYDIA.

No, none, sir.

I had not let my maid go forth to-day
Thought I the roads unsafe.

POLICEMAN.

Fear nothing, madam :

The force protects the fair. My mission here

Is to wreak ultion for the broken law.

I wish your ladyship good afternoon.

LYDIA. Good afternoon.

[Exit POLICEMAN.

A prizefight ! O my heart !

Cashel : hast thou deceived me ? Can it be

Thou hast backslidden to the hateful calling

I asked thee to eschew ?

O wretched maid,

Why didst thou flee from London to this place

To write thy father's life, whenas in town

Thou mightst have kept a guardian eye on him—

Whats that ? A flying footstep—

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL.

Sanctuary !

The law is on my track. What ! Lydia here !

LYDIA. Ay : Lydia here. Hast thou done murder,
then,

That in so horrible a guise thou comest ?

CASHEL. Murder ! I would I had. Yon cannibal

Hath forty thousand lives ; and I have taen

But thousands thirty-nine. I tell thee, Lydia,

On the impenetrable sarcolobe

That holds his seedling brain these fists have pounded

By Shrewsb'ry clock an hour. This bruised grass
And cakéd mud adhering to my form
I have acquired in rolling on the sod
Clinched in his grip. This scanty reefer coat
For decency snatched up as fast I fled
When the police arrived, belongs to Mellish.
Tis all too short ; hence my display of rib
And forearm mother-naked. Be not wroth
Because I seem to wink at you : by Heaven,
Twas Paradise that plugged me in the eye
Which I perforce keep closing. Pity me,
My training wasted and my blows unpaid,
Sans stakes, sans victory, sans everything
I had hoped to win. Oh, I could sit me down
And weep for bitterness.

LYDIA. Thou wretch, begone.

CASHEL. Begone !

LYDIA. I say begone. Oh, tiger's heart
Wrapped in a young man's hide, canst thou not live
In love with Nature and at peace with Man ?
Must thou, although thy hands were never made
To blacken other's eyes, still batter at
The image of Divinity ? I loathe thee.
Hence from my house and never see me more.

CASHEL. I go. The meanest lad on thy estate
Would not betray me thus. But tis no matter.

Ha ! the police. I'm lost. [*He opens the door.*
Now shalt thou see

My last fight fought. Exhausted as I am,
To capture me will cost the coppers dear.
Come one, come all !

LYDIA. Oh, hide thee, I implore :
I cannot see thee hunted down like this.
There is my room. Conceal thyself therein.

Quick, I command. [*He goes into the room.*]

With horror I foresee,
Lydia, that never lied, must lie for thee.

Enter POLICEMAN, with PARADISE and MELLISH in custody, BASHVILLE, constables, and others

POLICEMAN. Keep back your bruised prisoner lest he shock

This wellbred lady's nerves. Your pardon, maam ;
But have you seen by chance the other one ?
In this direction he was seen to run.

LYDIA. A man came here anon with bloody hands
And aspect that did turn my soul to snow.

POLICEMAN. Twas he. What said he ?

LYDIA. Begged for sanctuary.
I bade the man begone.

POLICEMAN. Most properly.
Saw you which way he went ?

LYDIA. I cannot tell.

PARADISE. He seen me coming ; and he done a bunk.

POLICEMAN. Peace, there. Excuse his damaged
features, lady :

He's Paradise ; and this one's Byron's trainer,
Mellish.

MELLISH. Injurious copper, in thy teeth
I hurl the lie. I am no trainer, I.
My father, a respected missionary,
Apprenticed me at fourteen years of age
T' the poetry writing. To these woods I came
With Nature to commune. My revery
Was by a sound of blows rudely dispelled.
Mindful of what my sainted parent taught

I rushed to play the peacemaker, when lo !
These minions of the law laid hands on me.

BASHVILLE. A lovely woman, with distracted cries,
In most resplendent fashionable frock,
Approaches like a wounded antelope.

Enter ADELAIDE GISBORNE

ADELAIDE. Where is my Cashel ? Hath he been
arrested ?

POLICEMAN. I would I had thy Cashel by the collar :
He hath escaped me.

ADELAIDE. Praises be for ever !

LYDIA. Why dost thou call the missing man thy
Cashel ?

ADELAIDE. He is mine only son.

ALL. Thy son !

ADELAIDE.

My son.

LYDIA. I thought his mother hardly would have
known him,

So crushed his countenance.

ADELAIDE.

A ribald peer,
Lord Worthington by name, this morning came
With honeyed words beseeching me to mount
His four-in-hand, and to the country hie
To see some English sport. Being by nature
Frank as a child, I fell into the snare,
But took so long to dress that the design
Failed of its full effect ; for not until
The final round we reached the horrid scene.
Be silent all ; for now I do approach
My tragedy's catastrophe. Know, then,
That Heaven did bless me with an only son,
A boy devoted to his doting mother——

POLICEMAN. Hark ! did you hear an oath from yonder room ?

ADELAIDE. Respect a broken-hearted mother's grief,
And do not interrupt me in my scene.
Ten years ago my darling disappeared
(Ten dreary twelvemonths of continuous tears,
Tears that have left me prematurely aged ;
For I am younger far than I appear).
Judge of my anguish when to-day I saw
Stripped to the waist, and fighting like a demon
With one who, whatsoe'er his humble virtues,
Was clearly not a gentleman, my son !

ALL. O strange event ! O passing tearful tale !

ADELAIDE. I thank you from the bottom of my heart
For the reception you have given my woe ;
And now I ask, where is my wretched son ?
He must at once come home with me, and quit
A course of life that cannot be allowed.

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL. Policeman : I do yield me to the law.

LYDIA. Oh no.

ADELAIDE. My son !

CASHEL. My mother ! Do not kiss me :
My visage is too sore.

POLICEMAN. The lady hid him.

This is a regular plant. You cannot be
Up to that sex. [To CASHEL] You come along with
me.

LYDIA. Fear not, my Cashel : I will bail thee out.

CASHEL. Never. I do embrace my doom with joy.
With Paradise in Pentonville or Portland
I shall feel safe : there are no mothers there.

ADELAIDE. Ungracious boy—

CASHEL.

Constable : bear me hence.

MELLISH. Oh, let me sweetest reconciliation make
By calling to thy mind that moving song :—

[Sings] They say there is no other—

CASHEL. Forbear at once, or the next note of music
That falls upon thine ear shall clang in thunder
From the last trumpet.

ADELAIDE.

A disgraceful threat

To level at this virtuous old man.

LYDIA. Oh, Cashel, if thou scornst thy mother thus,
How wilt thou treat thy wife ?

CASHEL.

There spake my fate :

I knew you would say that. Oh, mothers, mothers,
Would you but let your wretched sons alone
Life were worth living ! Had I any choice
In this importunate relationship ?

None. And until that high auspicious day
When the millennium on an orphaned world
Shall dawn, and man upon his fellow look,
Reckless of consanguinity, my mother
And I within the self-same hemisphere
Conjointly may not dwell.

ADELAIDE.

Ungentlemanly !

CASHEL. I am no gentleman. I am a criminal,
Redhanded, baseborn—

ADELAIDE.

Baseborn ! Who dares say it ?

Thou art the son and heir of Bingley Bumpkin
FitzAlgernon de Courcy Cashel Byron,
Sieur of Park Lane and Overlord of Dorset,
Who after three months wedded happiness
Rashly fordid himself with prussic acid,
Leaving a tearstained note to testify
That having sweetly honeymooned with me,
He now could say, O Death, where is thy sting ?

POLICEMAN. Sir: had I known your quality, this cop
I had averted; but it is too late.
The law's above us both.

Enter LUCIAN, with an Order in Council

LUCIAN. Not so, policeman.
I bear a message from The Throne itself
Of fullest amnesty for Byron's past.
Nay, more : of Dorset deputy lieutenant
He is proclaimed. Further, it is decreed,
In memory of his glorious victory
Over our country's foes at Islington,
The flag of England shall for ever bear
On azure field twelve swanlike spots of white ;
And by an exercise of feudal right
Too long disused in this anarchic age
Our sovereign doth confer on him the hand
Of Miss Carew, Wiltstoken's wealthy heiress.

[General acclamation.

POLICEMAN. Was anything, sir, said about me?

LUCIAN. Thy faithful services are not forgot:
In future call thyself Inspector Smith.

[*Renewed acclamation.*]

POLICEMAN. I thank you, sir. I thank you, gentlemen.

LUCIAN. My former opposition, valiant champion,
Was based on the supposed discrepancy
Betwixt your rank and Lydia's. Here's my hand.

BASHVILLE. And I do here unselfishly renounce
All my pretensions to my lady's favor. [*Sensation.*]

LYDIA. What, Bashville ! didst thou love me ?

BASHVILLE. Madam: yes.

Tis said : now let me leave immediately.

LYDIA. In taking, Bashville, this most tasteful course
You are but acting as a gentleman

In the like case would act. I fully grant
 Your perfect right to make a declaration
 Which flatters me and honors your ambition.
 Prior attachment bids me firmly say
 That whilst my Cashel lives, and polyandry
 Rests foreign to the British social scheme,
 Your love is hopeless ; still, your services,
 Made zealous by disinterested passion,
 Would greatly add to my domestic comfort ;
 And if——

CASHEL. Excuse me. I have other views.
 I've noted in this man such aptitude
 For art and exercise in his defence
 That I prognosticate for him a future
 More glorious than my past. Henceforth I dub him
 The Admirable Bashville, Byron's Novice ;
 And to the utmost of my mended fortunes
 Will back him gainst the world at ten stone six.

ALL. Hail, Byron's Novice, champion that shall be !

BASHVILLE. Must I renounce my lovely lady's service,
 And mar the face of man ?

CASHEL. 'Tis Fate's decree.
 For know, rash youth, that in this star crost world
 Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good
 In what we can, and not in what we would.

POLICEMAN. A post-horn—hark !

CASHEL. What noise of wheels is this ?

LORD WORTHINGTON *drives upon the scene in his four-
 in-hand, and descends*

ADELAIDE. Perfidious peer !

LORD WORTHINGTON. Sweet Adelaide——

ADELAIDE. Forbear,

Audacious one : my name is Mrs. Byron.

LORD WORTHINGTON. Oh, change that title for the sweeter one

Of Lady Worthington.

CASHEL. Unhappy man,
You know not what you do.

LYDIA. Nay, tis a match
Of most auspicious promise. Dear Lord Worthington,
You tear from us our mother-in-law—

CASHEL. Ha! True.

LYDIA. —but we will make the sacrifice. She blushes :
At least she very prettily produces
Blushing's effect.

ADELAIDE. My lord : I do accept you.

[*They embrace. Rejoicings.*

CASHEL [*aside*] It wrings my heart to see my noble
backer

Lay waste his future thus. The world's a chessboard,
And we the merest pawns in fist of Fate.

[*Aloud*] And now, my friends, gentle and simple both,
Our scene draws to a close. In lawful course
As Dorset's deputy lieutenant I
Do pardon all concerned this afternoon
In the late gross and brutal exhibition
Of miscalled sport.

LYDIA [*throwing herself into his arms*] Your boats are
burnt at last.

CASHEL. This is the face that burnt a thousand boats,
And ravished Cashel Byron from the ring.
But to conclude. Let William Paradise
Devote himself to science, and acquire,
By studying the player's speech in Hamlet,
A more refined address. You, Robert Mellish,
To the Blue Anchor hostelry attend him ;
Assuage his hurts, and bid Bill Richardson
Limit his access to the fatal tap.

Now mount we on my backer's four-in-hand,
And to St. George's Church, whose portico
Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit Street,
Repair we all. Strike up the wedding march ;
And, Mellish, let thy melodies trill forth
Broad oer the wold as fast we bowl along.
Give me the post-horn. Loose the flowing rein ;
And up to London drive with might and main.

[*Exeunt.*

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